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I.

ON MEDICAL LITERATURE AND EDUCATION.

Non frons percussa ? non femur ? pedum  
nulla supplosio ?—Quint. lib. xi. cap. 3.

A WRITER in a highly respectable work, published at Edinburgh, indulges in some caustic remarks on the state of medical literature and medical education in Scotland. The most sarcastic of these remarks, although well seasoned with attic salt, can scarcely be agreeable to a professional palate; but others which are more mild, and may prove more useful, are worthy the perusal of the medical reader.

In an age, he remarks, when so much has been done for the advancement of the Arts and Sciences, when old-clothes-men profess themselves Utilitarians, and coffee-grinders write historical accounts of "Mocha's sober berry," it is deplorable to think that medical literature still retains the features of semi-barbary which characterized it under the dynasty of the Barber-Surgeons. Its only change, since the days of the painted pole, consists in its having discarded all belief in Alchemical and Astrological mysticism. We say this, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, "more in sorrow than in anger;" but alas! the truth is too glaring to be overlooked;—it stares us in the face from Dan to Beersheba;

and, while our law commentaries, and volumes of pulpit instruction, manifest, in their composition, such a general spirit of improvement, and seem determined to keep pace with the enlightenment of that age, for which Mr. Brougham's schoolmaster has done so much, our medical treatises are still deformed by that quackery in disguise, as to matter, and that unclassical coarseness as to manner, which evince a radical defect somewhere.

After a very little probing, *secundum artem*, it appears to us pretty evident that the root of the malady lies in the deficiency of a preparatory classical education. We have no great faith in Dr. Spurzheim's mental manifestations; but surely thirteen, or even fourteen, is by much too early an age for the commencement of a medical apprenticeship. Because, in the first place, the character is not then marked by the tendencies and peculiarities which are to distinguish it through after life; and, in the second place, because no preliminary education can be considered as perfected by that time. Shakspeare's "little Latin and less Greek," is consequently the portion of nineteen-twentieths of the young men, who, after three or four seasons dedicated to the manipulation of pills, the labeling of potions, the portage of packages, and the oxidation of quicksilver, now and then varied by the

phlebotomization of paupers, and the bungling extraction of decayed masticators, present themselves for matriculation at College, for the purpose of qualifying themselves for a diploma, to legalize their sporting with the lives of his Majesty's loyal and unlucky subjects.

We are quite aware that certain recent enactments fix the term of study, and that it is protracted or shortened according to particular circumstances. Were this not the case, precocity would have even greater room for triumph than it now possesses. As it is, the spirit of adventure has "ample room and verge enough;" for, in all conscience, eighteen is an early enough age to let loose a diplomaed *Æsculapius* on society, with powers to have Messrs. John Bull, Alexander Tartan, and Paddy Whack, under the lancet, before his own chin is under the razor.

It is not enough to *recommend* medical practitioners in the country to *encourage* the young men apprenticed with them to prosecute the study of the Latin, Greek and modern languages, together with the elements of the Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, as a step preparatory to their entering college. Surgeons, both in town and country, have something to do with their apprentices, more nearly allied to their own selfish interests than the furtherance of their classical studies, which the young men themselves regard in rather the light of a troublesome humbug; so, between the two, Cæsar and Cicero are left to quiet repose on their shelves, and Gregory's *Conspectus*, for aught they know, may be purer in its Latinity than the *Opera Celsi*.

Until within two or three years back, a medical student in Scot-

land, so far as regarded his presence at class, had not a single tie upon him; and everything was left to his own sense of propriety—often latitudinarian enough. Only two things were incumbent upon him—to register himself in the College Album, and to see his teachers. His attendance on lecture, nay, even his residence in Edinburgh, was a matter left entirely to his own free will. His attention to his studies, or progress in them, were matters of as mere chance as the stable-yard game of pitch and toss. Freed from all domestic trammels, and from the scowl of the rustic pettifogger, under whose tuition he had learned the art of manufacturing pitch-plasters, and cauterizing spavined coal-heavers, the young disciple of the Hippocratic art finds himself, as it were, fallen from the clouds in the streets of Edinburgh; his senses bewildered with novelty, and his eyes dazzled like those of Aladdin in the Arabian tale. It is not easy to conceive what imaginations run in the young fellow's head. But yesterday he was an apprentice boy, and now he is a denizen of the Royal College of James the Sixth: he considers himself a sort of Gregory in embryo. As to study, nobody cares about study during the first session; there will be time enough for that sort of thing afterwards—and, to his gratified astonishment, he finds that there is literally no embargo on his hours at all.

How then does the professional descendant of Fabricius de Aquapendente conduct himself? Why, exactly as might be expected by any one who is not an Utopian, or a believer in the doctrines of human perfectibility. He attends a few mornings on the *Materia Medica*

lectures, which he soon takes it into his sapient head he quite knows already, from his three years' operatic experience in Dr. Colocynth's laboratory. Besides, no one, without absolute compulsion, would ever dream of floundering through the sleet and snow to a lecture room, on a cold dark morning in the dead of winter. It will be time enough to venture abroad after breakfast, and then comes the chemistry.

The science of Lavoisier and Sir Humphry Davy presents something more attractive. Young Hopeful, accordingly, sets to work, tooth and nail. He reads voraciously,—comprehends—or thinks he does so—all about the alkalies, and caloric, and the atomic theory, and not only sees, but repeats a multitude of experiments, to the endangerment of his landlady, and her numerous progeny of helpless children; all of whom run the risk of being exploded through the roof by the unexpected bursting of retorts, or the equally unexpected combustion of hydrogen. Electrical machines and Galvanic troughs are sad affairs; but fulminating silver is the devil itself, and sometimes unaccountably takes it into its head to go off without the slightest forewarning.

Our protégé then tries anatomy, only to find the albinuses and campers repulsive fellows, and osteology as dry as an old maid of seventy. Besides, what need of hearing a musty harangue over a putrid carcase? All the anatomical works have plates remarkably like nature, and much more pleasant than the disenchanted reality.—Being now one of the initiated, he however finds it incumbent upon him to scout popular prejudices; defends science and the resurrec-

tionists, and waxeth eloquent on the persecutions of Dr. Knox.

The result of all this is, that, in the course of a month or six weeks, our friend's appearances at lecture are "like angel visits, few and far between;" and ere another moon wane her horns, he has heroically cut the whole concern, as a bore of the first magnitude. He finds something infinitely more diverting in the billiard room in Infirmary Street, and the meetings of the Six Feet Club in Bruntsfield Links. The diorama of Holyrood Chapel is a delightful spectacle; so is the comic opera of Burke and Hare. What is Dr. Duncan to Madame Vestris or Miss Paton? Dr. Hope could not hold a candle either to the Indian Jugglers or Monsieur Chabert: Dr. Alibert must succumb to Francalanza, inasmuch as the theory of physic is inferior, in chivalric spirit, to the practice of fencing; nor has the dismemberment of a rotten subject at Dr. Monro's, any chance with the savory dissection of a stubble goose at Ambrose's Hotel, Picardy Place.

However overcharged such a picture may seem, we suspect it is nearer the truth with a large proportion of the young gentlemen who come to Edinburgh with the ostensible purpose of studying physic, than will be readily believed by the unmedical world, or their friends in the country. We are convinced that such is the fact, and we know it to be so. But, allowing that in the tenth instance it is otherwise, wherein consists the cause of this phoenix being distinguished from the *profanum vulgus*? We have only to look for it in one of two things. It must either have fallen to his lot to have fortunately brought to his medical

studies that necessary degree of preliminary classical education which we have recommended, or he must be a person of strong, uncultivated talent, spurred into exertion by the multiplicity of channels for speculation, which the different professorships open up to his distracted attention. With the one it fares well, so far as his moral principles and religious belief are concerned. In the subjects treated of as matters of scientific speculation, and in the examination of the structure of the human body, he beholds only a wonderful adaptation of means to ends in the scheme of an allwise Providence. With the other, the reverse of all this is but unhappily too likely to occur. His mind possesses more vigor than discrimination, a greater zeal after truth than philosophical acumen in discovering it. He reads and thinks, till he gradually bewilders his judgment, and loses the power of discriminating the specious from the real. The groundwork of the science he is studying, he soon finds to resemble Milton's chaos, in being "a maze without a plan." One age has only pulled down one theory to set up another, whose duration proved not a whit more permanent; desperate efforts are made to throw light on mysteries, which appear inscrutable as the liability (and only once) of the human body to variola, the extension of particular fevers to particular days, and mental hallucination without vascular excitement or organic derangement. His thoughts are at length tossed on a shoreless sea of doubt, and this sceptical disposition extends itself over every subject of contemplation, till our Sadducee

comes in the end, like Bishop Berkeley, to be uncertain as to the reality of matter, or personal identity, or existence. The summation of this miserable delusion is effected by the study of practical anatomy. There all his principles are unsettled, and probably upset forever. In the decay of the material frame he thinks that he beholds the utter extinction of man, whose moral and intellectual endowments he has come to regard only as the result of material organization. Fatalism, in all its gloom, takes possession of his mind; and he has the hardihood to declare in words what Lawrence has promulgated in writing.

If he escapes this abyss—the most awful which can engulf the sentiments of a human being—he is in danger of imbibing opinions forever derogatory to the character of the profession he is destined to follow through life. From the chaotic state of disorder in which the principles and practice of the healing art are still taught, he soon finds that what one lauds as the essence of truth, the other derides as the height of nonsense; and that every individual physician of eminence has his favorite nostrums and panaceas, which he is apt to lug in on all occasions. One lecturer, a far way, perhaps, declined into the vale of years, has still a lingering hankering after Boerhaave, and the doctrines of the humoral pathology: a second sees a great deal to admire in excitability, brandy, and Dr. Brown: while a third is all for Cullen, spasm of the extreme vessels, and starvation. Yesterday he was told that, in mercury and its chemical combinations, may be found specifics

for all the diseases that eloped from Pandora's box ; and to-day he learns, from perhaps the same authority, that half the ailments afflicting modern society arise from their indiscriminate administration. Of the eternal jargon about the identity of smallpox, chickenpox, swinepox, hornpox, crystalpox, pearlpoxy, and all the rest of the poxes and hoaxes, he is condemned to swallow dose after dose, day after day, *usque ad nauseam*, only to find "confusion worse confounded." One swears by the galenicals,—gamboge is worth gold, and gentian worth the fine gold. Another is as exclusively attached to the chemicals,—in the sulphate of iron he beholds a specific for tic douloureux, and, in iodine, for scrofula. This proves, beyond the cavil of a doubt, the propriety of bloodletting in fevers ; that decries it as somewhat little short of downright murder. The plague has been proved to be not infectious ;—nay, even the circulation of the blood is, in the thirtieth year of the nineteenth century, stoutly denied as heterodox, by a surgeon in Perthshire !

Any one, with eyesight clearer than the mole, must perceive that there is something fundamentally, radically, wrong in all this. The experience of a long-linked succession of ages, from the days of Machaon and Podalirius to our own,—the recorded observations of Hippocrates and the Greeks—of Celsus and the Latins—of Avicenna and the Arabians—together with the thousand and one tomes of their mongrel modern descendants, who, under the title of Physicians and Barber-Chirurgeons, have bled and blistered mankind, from Roger Bacon to

Mathew Baillie,—ought to have led to a very different result. So Cretan-like is the labyrinth of absurdity which staggers us in the contemplation of the history of the healing art, that one would be almost led to suspect that it is incapable of settled principles. This is not, however, the case ; and we must look for the cause of a deplorable fact in medical men themselves, and not in the nature of their calling. Diseases remain specifically and intrinsically the same ; only the self-will of every generation of *Æsculapians* goads them on to the independency of looking upon them with different optics. It is true that a few anomalies have occurred in the instances of smallpox, lues, and the sweating sickness, being unknown, or at least not having been described by the ancients ; yet these are but drops in the bucket ; and the cases of Hippocrates may, from his accurate enumeration of their symptoms, be readily arranged under their distinctive heads in the nosologies of Sauvages or Cullen.

There has been a lack of master-minds. Of materials we have abundant measure, heaped up, and flowing over. There are lots of bulky authors, like Dioscorides and Van Swieten, and libraries are piled up with the transactions of medical societies. But, unfortunately, the healing art is, of all others, the least compatible with genius, and hence we have been much more solidly indebted to the plodding observations of the Boerhaaves, Morgagni and Sydenhams, than to the more speculative doctrines of Beddoes and Darwin. The art is entirely a practical art. Its principles, were they properly laid down,

might be acquired by reading ; but they cannot be safely acted upon without much actual initiatory observation. To be really understood and comprehended, it must be practised ; and the entirely practical man is not the person capable of systematizing. We might as well expect the design of another Parthenon from the stone-mason who excels his fellows in the use of the chisel and mallet.

Before the days of Cullen, whose fine intellect towered above the dead level of absurd mediocrity, medical science was a palpable illustration of Ovid's *rudaque indigesta moles*. From the myriads of volumes which had been bequeathed as the results of precious experience, no general rules could be drawn. Each author maintained doctrines as adverse as the theories of Sir Isaac Newton to those of Sir Richard Phillips, or as the practice of the Anthropophagi to the precepts of Pythagoras. Although the hodge-podge was well stirred about with the stick of scholarship, crudities formed the dregs, pride and prejudice formed the scum, and mysteries and mysticisms floated through the mess, as thick as raisins in a Scottish peasant's bridal broth. It remained for him to achieve for medicine, what Sir William Blackstone did for English jurisprudence. He picked the few grains of wheat from a mountain of chaff, which he scattered to the winds.

Not long afterwards, John Hunter exerted his enthusiastic mind in elucidating the doctrines of surgery. But he wanted the accurate taste and philosophical perception which characterized

the author of "The First Lines of the Practice of Physic ;" so, while in reading his works we every now and then stumble on some striking observation, which seems to say "*ex pede Hercules*," we are much more often forced to sigh over unfounded and flimsy speculations, which, while they show how thorny is the way, at the same time proclaim how unsafe is the guide. His eagerness for inquiry often led him beyond the limits of fact ; and he lost himself in the clouds. His deservedly high character created for him a host of followers, many of whom, from their incapacity to discriminate between philosophy and sophisms, swore by him through thick and thin ; and we doubt not, that, even at this hour of the day, his favorite doctrine of the vitality of the blood would be stickled for to their last breath, by some adventurous lanceet-brandishers between Caithness and Cornwall. So dangerous become the most puerile follies, when supported by the magic of a great name !

All true medical science must necessarily be founded on physiology, or a knowledge of the functions of organic structure. Now, at the present day, we know little or nothing of the true doctrines of physiology. A great many things have been assumed as truths, and passed current even for ages as such, which, when philosophically examined into, have proved as illusory as the aurora borealis. Cardan's little devil in the stomach has proved to be as near the fact, in accounting for digestion, as the long-assumed doctrine of trituration. Whytt and Porterfield set the example of true scientific investigation, and were followed, in our own day, by Dr.

John Gordon, the prince of physiologists, who, while laying the foundation of a glorious superstructure, to the everlasting loss of medicine perished in the bright noon of his exertions. Gordon was the man who was to have created a new era in the healing art. He had devoted years of laborious investigation to the end of establishing or disproving the current doctrines; and, having cleared away the mountain of rubbish accumulated by time, he had commenced his system. Little more than the outlines were formed, but these are invaluable, and will remain as guides to future inquirers. He possessed a fine philosophical genius, and drew his inferences from that extensive circle of information which a knowledge of modern languages affords. He was thoroughly acquainted with the writings and discoveries of the great existing physicians of Italy, Germany and France; besides which, he had the eye to observe, the science to investigate, and the capacity to generalize. With that leniency in exposing the fallacious doctrines of others which a benevolent heart dictated, his scrutinizing intellect was unsatisfied with everything which could not be unequivocally proved. He has as yet found no successor; but we trust the day is not far distant when the subject will be prosecuted in the philosophical spirit of which he has set such a beautiful example.

The only true great medical work which modern times has produced, is "the Study of Medicine," by Dr. Mason Good. In him, too, were met the two grand requisites of classical attainments and practical know-

ledge. His book is one of the most gigantic ever bequeathed to the world by the industry of one man, and it is one of the best. Whatever may be thought of his Nosology, which we allow to be over-informed with etymological niceties and jaw-breaking compounds—for which Hebrew, Arabic and Greek are, in their turns, made to suffer martyrdom—we have, from the day of its publication, regarded his systematic work with feelings of the highest admiration. It comprehends by far the most complete and the most correct view of medical science anywhere to be met with; is full of ingenuity and research, and is destined, we have no doubt, of recording, to the latest posterity, the state in which medicine existed in the nineteenth century. In every page we discern the scholar and the philosopher; erudition and research go hand in hand with taste; and the reader is delighted to find that the most important knowledge, regarding the theory and practice of physic, can be conveyed in a way capable even of engaging his attention, by its classical elegance. In every point of view, we regard it as the student's best manual; and we pledge our credit, that the months and years devoted to its examination will be looked back upon, in after life, as by no means those that have been the least conducive to profit and improvement.

As we never gather pine-apples from bramble-bushes, nor figs from thistles, so it would be equally absurd to expect a well-written medical work from the practitioner who has occasional doubts as to the spelling of his own name, and whose language as much resembles Sanscrit as Eng-

lish. No, no. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* Philosophical reasoning is the produce of philosophical habits of thinking,—cool, clear, dispassionate, and freed from all predilections and prejudices. Since the creation of Adam, no classically-written book was ever given to the world save by a classically educated person; or ever shall be, till the extinction of Omegarius.

That medical literature is in a disgraceful state, there can be no doubt; and we believe this to originate in the lack of that preparatory classical education which is essentially necessary not only to give the mind its polish, but even to just habits of thinking. Nothing must be left to chance, or to a vague sense of propriety. Until regulations to enforce attention to this subject are enacted, it will be in vain to look for any general improvement. The error must be rectified at its fountain-head, ere a higher tone can be given to medical writings. Let every young man be obliged to give proofs of his scholarship ere he be admitted as a professional student. When he has matriculated, let him first be taught the philosophical principles of his art, ere he loses his powers of discrimination in the confusion of practice; and it requires not the powers of a sybil to predict, that when a better preparation is prescribed, a happier consummation will be arrived at.

## II.

### RELIGIOUS RITES OF BODIES DESIGNED FOR DISSECTION.

WHEN Mr. Abernethy delivered his Hunterian Oration at the College of Surgeons, he noticed one

objection, which is sometimes uttered by most respectable individuals, that the deaths of dissected persons would be unhallowed by any religious ceremony. It would have been a difficult topic in any other hands than those of this great lecturer; but he answered the scruple by remarking, that the burial service might be read over them *before* dissection, substituting for the passage "we therefore commit his body to the ground," some expression appropriate to its peculiar destination (as is the custom on the continent), signifying that a knowledge of the internal form of the human body is necessary for the cure of diseases and useful for religious instruction, as disclosing the most wonderful examples of divine wisdom and power; that, as this knowledge can be gained only by dissection, and, as in the present case, dissection can give pain neither to the body (for it is senseless) nor to relations, for there are none to grieve over it; for these reasons, that is consigned to the inquiries of the learned, which would otherwise have been food for worms.

## III.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

*Hampton, Con., April 10, 1830.*

SIR,—Having lately met with a singular case, I have thought proper to send it to you for insertion in your useful periodical, should you think proper. Want of time prevents my putting it in better shape, and I must leave it for your better skill and judgment to prepare for the press, if you

judge the facts worth presenting to the public.\*

Mrs. —, being advanced about three months in gestation, was suddenly surprised by a large dog seizing a kitten by the top of the head, and crushing it with his teeth. The kitten's eyes were pushed from their sockets, and the blood flowed from the wounds, which, coagulating, covered the top of the head with a gore of blood. The kitten ran under an out-building, and, after a short time, came again into the house, and was seen again by Mrs. —. The impression made on her was strong; but her health continued good until labor commenced. There was nothing worthy of notice during labor, except the presentation, which was embarrassing, and the duration of it, which was rendered tedious by one of the child's shoulders hitching behind the symphysis pubis. I was satisfied that the fetus was preternatural before birth; for it was impossible to find any part of a natural head, on examination, except an ear, and that very thick and hard. After birth, the head of the child presented an appearance so much resembling that of the wounded kitten, that the father of the child immediately exclaimed, "It was the kitten that the dog killed;" and then, for the first time, made known to me the facts above mentioned. There was no resemblance to a natural head above the orbits of the eyes, but an irregular mass, not one-fourth so large as the part of the head which was wanting, and appearing like coagulated blood enclosed in a very thin

membrane. This mass seemed to have for its base an irregular bony substance. The fetus was alive about nine hours before birth, but dead when born. Whether this malformation was caused by the wounded and deformed kitten affecting the mother's imagination, or not, I cannot say; but the fact is so remarkable that I have thought it worth recording.

I think Richerand has quoted from an attendant of one of the London or Paris Lying-in hospitals, that he never saw a well-authenticated case of a mark on a child, caused by the imagination of the mother. I do not say that this fetus would not have been what it was, had its mother not seen the kitten: but the coincidence is striking. Any observer who could have looked at this fetus from behind, would have noticed a very great resemblance to a cat's head having its eyes protruded and its top covered with coagulated blood, and the bones broken up. The same woman had her first child marked, as she says, with a peach. She had in her garden a very few fine peaches which she was reserving for herself. A straggler came along and took them. She saw him, and called to him to leave them. He insultingly held them up for her to look at, and walked on. With much respect,

I am yours, &c.

WM. A. BREWSTER.

#### IV.

*To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.*

MR. EDITOR,—I know not of a stronger appeal to the public on the necessity and propriety of furnishing a legal supply of sub-

\* We have found no occasion to alter the phraseology of Dr. B., the facts being communicated with perfect clearness. *Ed.*

jects for dissection, than is contained in the first article of the London Quarterly Review for January, 1830. At the same time that it evinces a perfect acquaintance with the nature of the means required for the study of anatomy, such as could only be possessed by a medical man, it is expressed with a simplicity of language which fits it singularly well for the perusal of the general reader. Although published anonymously, it is now known that its author was the late distin-

guished Dr. Gooch. Should there be room for it in your valuable Journal, you probably could not select anything for its pages which would be more acceptable to the generality of your subscribers.

Respectfully yours,  
MEDICUS.

The admirable article referred to occupies so much space in the London Quarterly, that we must decline republishing it entire, although we recommend it to the careful perusal of the profession as well as the public.

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BOSTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 1830.

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THE M'LEAN ASYLUM.

WE noticed, a few weeks ago, the Private Hospital for the Insane under the care of Dr. Cutter, of Pepperell, and particularly remarked on his accommodations for the *incurable*. It was incidentally mentioned as a reason for congratulation in the existence of such an institution, that incurables are not received at the M'Lean Asylum. This impression we have always had. It has existed, and we apprehend does now prevail very generally among the Faculty and with the public, and we may even add that the same belief exists in the minds of some of the "Board of Visitors" of the Institution itself. We had thought that the M'Lean Asylum was designed exclusively for the medical and moral treatment of persons laboring under mental derangement, with a view to remove or ameliorate their malady; and that it was in no measure designed as a

home—as a mere safe and quiet retreat—for such as are deemed permanently and incurably insane.—This Asylum is, as all know, a branch of the Massachusetts General Hospital. At that Hospital in this city, incurables of other diseases *are not received*; and we had supposed that a like regulation extended to the branch at Charlestown, and that it was this circumstance which gave rise to the act for the establishment and liberal endowment by the Legislature, at their late session, of another institution for the Insane, the sole object of which should be to afford a safe and proper retreat for such as are confessedly beyond the prospect of a cure.—It may not be improper to add that this impression was confirmed, very recently, by a conversation with one of the most distinguished members of the profession in this city, who informed us that he had applied personally for the admission into the

Asylum at Charlestown of an individual who was insane, and to whom admission was refused upon the express ground that incurables were not received; and that a medical friend of his, residing in a neighboring town, had communicated to him a like experience.—These things are here stated, not only to justify ourselves in the expression of the opinion referred to, but also for the purpose of calling the attention of the Faculty to the subject; since ample grounds will be laid before them to show that this opinion is erroneous, that some mistake must have existed in the cases above specified, and that *incurables are received* and taken good care of at the M'Lean Asylum.

Shortly after the publication referred to, we received the following anonymous letter:—

Mr. Editor,—The number of your Journal published yesterday contains a mistake in regard to the M'Lean Asylum for the Insane in Charlestown. It is stated, page 131, that "it has *long been* desirable that some appropriate place should be provided for *incurables*, since patients of this description *are not received* into the M'Lean Asylum, and yet require to be taken care of and provided for," &c.

The M'Lean Asylum for the Insane is a branch of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and under the direction of a board of Trustees, eight of whom are elected by the Corporation, and the remaining four are appointed by a Board of Visitors, consisting of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the two Chaplains. The Trustees are chosen annually, and have been frequently changed. By themselves or their

committees, they have visited and inspected the Asylum once at least in every week for eleven years. The Board of Visits have also inspected the Asylum for the same term, inquiring into its concerns and management: and yet it is not so much known, as might be supposed, that "*incurables*" are there "*received*," "*taken care of* and *provided for*."

It is presumed that by *incurables* is intended persons who have been insane more than one year; although the term frequently so used cannot be so applied with strict propriety. Now the fact is, that of 650 patients received into the Asylum since Oct., 1818, not less than one half had been insane from one to ten or twenty years. Of 67 patients now in the Asylum, the disease of 52 has existed more than one year. No class of lunatics has ever been refused admission, excepting such as were subject to epileptic fits. These have been excluded because, in the paroxysms, they would spread terror through the establishment.

As the grounds of the M'Lean Asylum have been purchased and laid out, and the buildings erected, at an expense exceeding one hundred and fifty thousand dollars,—as the site is unusually pleasant and healthy,—as the accommodations for the exercise, amusement, safety and comfort of the inmates, are certainly equal to those of any institution for the reception of lunatics in the United States,—"it must be a relief to the friends of such unfortunate persons, to know that a place" *has been long provided for their accommodation and safe keeping:*" and it must be a further relief to know that the objects of their care and solicitude will be under the vigilance and inspection of twelve distinguished, disinterested, philanthropic citizens, and subject to the visitation of six of the highest officers of the Commonwealth.

April 7.

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It seemed desirable, from the circumstances which have been stated, that the facts contained in this note should go to the public with some sanction, since, in opposition to the general impression, an *anonymous* letter would scarcely be entitled to notice. In the next paper, therefore, we requested the author to append his name to his epistle; which request was immediately complied with, as will be seen by the following note received a day or two after:—

I have just read the last number of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, and hasten to comply with the Editor's request respecting the above communication. This I do the more promptly, as it has been inferred, from the terms of that request, that the anonymous letter contained charges against the Asylum which ought to be made public.

I delivered the communication to the publisher of the Journal as my own, without the least restriction, and explained to him its object. Under these circumstances, I did not suppose a formal signature to be necessary. As, however, the Editor asserts that "it contains statements not generally known, and which, to have their due weight, should come from some good *authority*," I beg leave to refer to an "Address of the Trustees of the Massachusetts General Hospital to the Subscribers and to the Public," made March, 1822, and by them published and distributed gratuitously. Page 27, it is stated, "of 149 boarders (received into the Asylum), 3 were not insane, and discharged accordingly; 96 had been subjects of insanity from one to twenty-four years; and, in nearly the whole of the remaining 50, insanity had existed from three to twelve months." Permit me also to refer to a Boston Advertiser, published July 31, 1828. It contains a report of the Trustees, in which they

say, "The M'Lean Asylum has probably *one half* of that description of patients for whom the hope of recovery is so slight that they are properly classed among incurables, and have often been the occasion of an inability to receive recent cases." In the Boston Advertiser was also published, in 1826, a report of the Trustees containing the following remark:—"In estimating those restored to health, it should be noticed that a large proportion—*more than two-thirds*—of those inhabiting the Asylum, are *old, chronic cases*, which can offer very slender hopes of a perfect recovery."

Reference could be made to other public official documents, to show that a large proportion of the patients in the Asylum have been old cases, usually called incurable.

I am, respectfully,

RUFUS WYMAN.  
*M'Lean Asylum,*  
Charlestown, April 14, 1830.

Here then we have the question settled, on the best of all authority—that of the Physician to the Asylum.

In this last note, two suggestions are made requiring editorial remark. In the first place, Dr. Wyman considers that we might have ourselves added his name to his first letter, since he handed the communication to the *publisher* without any restriction. In the first place, the publisher was not certain who the gentleman was who gave him the letter; and, in the second place, we should in no case consider ourselves justified in putting the name of a writer to a piece communicated for the Journal, unless he had himself placed it there, or expressly authorised us so to do;—the mere absence of restrictions gives no such authority to an editor.

The second suggestion is, that our giving the plain reason for wishing the name of the writer, implied that charges had been brought *against* the Asylum. By reference to our note to correspondents, it will be seen that no such idea is expressed, and that such an inference must be wholly gratuitous. Even should such a voluntary inference have been drawn, the concluding part of that note ought to have silenced it. After requesting the writer to put his name to the letter, it is added, "we shall then insert it with *more* pleasure." Certainly no one can do us the injustice to suppose we should derive *any* pleasure from publishing charges against so admirable and useful an institution as the M'Lean Asylum.

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#### SYPHILIS.

WE have alluded, in a former paper, to some circumstances which appeared to us to portend a change of opinion, in the medical world, on some important points connected with this disease. We then mentioned that the notions of its American origin, and of its specific character—both of which had so long been held incontrovertible—had lately been called in question by a French writer of some distinction. In a late lecture of Mr. Lawrence in London, we find a similar idea again advanced, and maintained with considerable ingenuity. It appears, on the one hand, that the disease was not mentioned or treated of in a distinct form by any writer previous to the commencement of the sixteenth century; and as it was about this period that Columbus performed his celebrated

voyages, the inference has generally been admitted that the disease was contracted in St. Domingo by his sailors, carried by them to Spain, and from thence gradually disseminated over Europe. It is now found, however, that there are serious objections to this hypothesis. In the first place, there is no mention in the original account of either of the voyages of this navigator, that such a disease was among the number of their discoveries. The malady soon after received names indicative of its having a local origin; but even these afford no argument of its being referred, at that time, to Spain or the West Indies. In many parts of Europe, it received the appellation of *morbus gallicus*; but the French themselves, not relishing this national allusion, designated it as the neapolitan disease. There are not wanting arguments, however, to prove that the disease actually existed at a much earlier period than the one here referred to. Maladies arising from impure coition, and affecting the generative organs, are more or less distinctly recognised by all medical writers, both ancient and modern; and if the symptoms and progress of what is now called syphilis are nowhere to be found accurately described, this circumstance belongs to that looseness of description which characterizes the earlier accounts of many diseases of whose antiquity there can be no question. There is to be found, however, a sufficiently accurate account of the venereal disease, written by Peter Martyr in 1488, four years before Columbus sailed on his first voyage, which,

if admitted to be genuine, is conclusive of the controversy. It is a curious fact, for which we are indebted to Mr. Lawrence, that, in 1847, a public brothel was licensed by Johanna, Countess of Provence, among the regulations of which, is one directing its inmates to be examined at certain intervals by a surgeon, in order to ascertain whether they had contracted any disease from their mode of life, and, if so, to separate them, that those who visited the establishment might not be infected.

The specific character, as well as the modern origin of this disease, has found much difficulty in passing the ordeal of modern scepticism. Among the points which were thought, till lately, to be the most firmly established, were those of the specific nature of syphilitic disease; of a proper virus or poison by means of which it was communicated; of its distinct series of primary and secondary symptoms; and of its entire distinctness, in its origin and progress, from any other form of venereal disease. At present, all these propositions have begun to be considered doubtful. It has been distinctly asserted, and maintained by very plausible arguments, that this disease is produced by local inflammation, and not by any virus or poison introduced into the system; that, of the phenomena which have been considered as necessary to its regular progress, some are often absent or not to be recognised; and that the same state which renders an individual capable of communicating this disease to one person, may cause another to become infected with gonorrhœa, while a third

may escape without any injury whatever. In regard to this last circumstance, much is no doubt to be attributed to constitutional peculiarity. Mr. Lawrence quotes the medical report of Dr. Fergusson, on the state of the venereal disease in Portugal, at the time when considerable numbers of British troops were in that country. Although the symptoms which it exhibited among the native inhabitants were of the mildest kind, those officers and soldiers who contracted the disease from them had it with the greatest severity, and in the most intractable form.

Whatever value may be attached to the above mentioned speculations, they have at least the negative merit of being incapable of doing harm. A far more important question which has lately been agitated, relates to the treatment of syphilis by mercury, or otherwise. As to the *possibility* of effecting a cure of the disease by other remedies, we apprehend that this point has been long since settled in the affirmative. That it can be cured more speedily, more conveniently, more safely, or more thoroughly, has not appeared to us to be demonstrated by the facts or arguments hitherto adduced in favor of such mode of treatment.—On the contrary, by a general and impartial view of all that has been brought forward on both sides of the question, it appears to us that the non-mercurial mode of practice is by no means entitled to adoption.

#### USE OF KINO IN DIARRHœA.

M. BALLY has lately made an extensive trial of kino in cases of diarrhœa at La Pitié. The simplest cases were those of chronic purging, with-

out pain, colic, or other complication than a gradual diminution of the strength, unaccompanied by fever. Four or five days perseverance in the kino, to the extent of from twelve to twenty grains, were sufficient to arrest the disease when it had not been present more than two or three months; if it had been of longer duration, the treatment required was more protracted, but almost always efficacious. In one case, a diarrhoea of three years standing was cured by the kino.

But it is not merely in cases such as the above that the remedy has proved of service; in others, where there was violent pain and even tenderness on pressure, with fever, twelve or fourteen grains of kino, given three, four, or five days successively, have proved sufficient to effect a cure.

*Sea Sickness.*—Dr. Derbyshire, a respectable English physician, has obtained a patent for a preventive of sea-sickness, and it is said to have proved effectual in several cases. A preparation, probably somewhat similar, is sold by Ebenezer Wight, an Apothecary in this city. The following is an official copy of Dr. Derbyshire's specification.

Take of Crude Opium, two ounces;  
Extract of Henbane, two drachms;  
Powdered Mace, ten grains;  
Hard Mottled Soap, two ounces.

Boil them in sixty ounces (about four pints) of water, for half an hour, stirring them well. When cold, add one quart of spirit of wine, sixty de-

gress above proof, and three drachms of spirit of ammonia. Rub a dessertspoonful of this embrocation well over the lower end of the breast bone, and under the left ribs, the latest time it may be convenient previously to embarkation, and again on board as soon as possible, and repeat it if necessary.

*“State of the Markets.”*—We noticed, in the Faneuil Hall Market last week, beef of a very unusual appearance. The meat or muscular fibre was of the color of very white veal, and exhibited no trace of redness whatever. It was very fat,—but the fat could not be discerned from the lean parts, except on near inspection, so closely did the color of the two correspond. On inquiry, we ascertained that this was one of twenty oxen brought from the country, all having had the same food and treatment in every particular, all being in fine health and order, and weighing from 1000 to 1200 lbs. each. They were slaughtered in the vicinity, in the common way, and none but this, which was a black ox, presented anything unusual. The abundance of fat, hardness of the bones, redness of the kidneys, &c., evinced a state of sound health, and the whiteness of the muscular fibre was its only peculiarity. The meat was sold to a number of persons, who found it tender and fine flavored.

Excellent mutton was also hanging on a neighboring stall, which was slaughtered in Liverpool, England.

WEEKLY REPORT OF DEATHS IN BOSTON, ENDING APRIL 9.

Date.	Sex.	Age.	Disease.	Date.	Sex.	Age	Disease.
April 2.	M.	9 w	unknown		M.	5 yrs	typhous fever
	F.	24 yrs	childbed		F.	5	consumption
	M.	26	brain fever	7.	F.	27	do.
	F.	47	unknown		M.	35	accidental
	F.	61	debility		F.	52	sudden
	F. 2 1-2		consumption	8.	M.	15 mo	infantile
	F.	19	do.		M.	33 yrs	consumption
5.	F.	55	do.	9.	F.	43	inflammation of bowels
6.	M.	52	suicide		F.	10 h	
	M.	3 w	infantile		M.	2 yrs	measles

Males, 9.—Females, 11. Stillborn, 4. Total, 24.

## ADVERTISEMENTS.

## SUPERIOR STETHOSCOPE.

CARTER & HENDEE have constantly on hand, Stethoscopes of the most approved form, manufactured by George Wheelwright.

They also publish a Manual for the Use of the Stethoscope. A short Treatise on the different Methods of investigating the Diseases of the Chest. Translated from the French of M. Collin by W. N. Ryland, M.D., from the third London edition: with plates and an explanatory introduction, by a Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society.

April 6.

## MEMORIA MEDICA.

THIS day published by CARTER & HENDEE, corner of Washington and School Streets, *Memoria Medica*,—a Medical Common-place Book,—with an alphabetical Index of the most common terms occurring in practice. Carefully selected and arranged by a Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society.

From Dr. James Jackson, Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine in Harvard University.

Gentlemen,—I have examined the “*Memoria Medica*” which you sent to me. I think the plan of it very excellent, and that it will be found highly useful to practitioners and students of medicine. I have never believed that a voluminous common-place book can be very beneficial to any man, unless he means to become an author. But on the other hand, every one will find an advantage in keeping a common-place book in which he may notice the detached facts which come under his notice, and which are likely soon to be lost from his memory. The book you have prepared will be found well adapted for this purpose by medical men, and will be more likely to be used by those who procure it than a common blank book, because all the labor of arrangement is saved.

I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant,  
JAMES JACKSON.

From Dr. Walter Channing, Professor of Obstetrics and Medical Jurisprudence in Harvard University.

I have examined the Medical Common-

place Book which was left with your note this evening, and with pleasure offer you my thanks for the publication of so useful a volume. Every practitioner of medicine will agree with the remarks in the preface on the inconveniences and absolute loss of what is very useful, which result from depending solely on the memory. Not unfrequently it happens that some particular prescription is peculiarly suited to an individual. Some time passes, and an occasion again arises in which we believe that the same medicine might be equally beneficial; what it was, however, has wholly escaped us; and though something else may be equally useful, still some regret may be felt, at least by the patient, that what has been found beneficial cannot again be at once resorted to. Some object to an artificial method of preserving, for such and other uses, what may be safely trusted to the memory, if that faculty be faithfully cultivated. I am willing to admit that there is force in this objection; but it is a simple question of fact only we have to consider. If it be true that there is much lost to the individual, and certainly much more to the profession, by trusting entirely to the memory, the occasional use of the Common-place Book for the preservation of what is truly valuable, has all the recommendation it needs. For such purposes, viz., for the registering of cases the most rare, and the frequent, if important, epidemics, prescriptions, &c., your *Memoria Medica* promises to be very useful; and for these it well deserves to be recommended to physicians. Students attending hospital practice will find it very valuable. Its tables of names are very full, and under references very easy. I cannot but hope it will get into general use.

Yours, &c.,  
W. CHANNING.  
Dec. 8.

## AN ENGRAVING,

PRESENTING the Perfect and Imperfect Cow Pox and the Chicken Pox, during their course, by J. D. Fisher, M.D. This day published and for sale by CARTER & HENDEE, cor. of Washington and School sts. Price 62 1-2 cts.

Jan 26.